NUMB. XXVII.

The SPECTATOR.

Ut nox longa quibus Mentitur amica, dieſque
Longa videtur opus debentibus, ut piger Annus
Pupillis, quos dura premit Cuſtodia matrum,
Sic mihi Tarda fluunt ingrataque Tempora, quæ ſpem
Conſiliumque morantur agendi Gnaviter, id quod
Æquè pauperibus prodeſt, Locupletibus æquè,
Æquè neglectum pueris ſenibuſque nocebit. Hor.

Saturday, March 31. 1711.

THERE is ſcarce a thinking Man in the World, who is involved in the Buſineſs of it, but lives under a ſecret Impatience of the Hurry and Fatigue he ſuffers, and has formed a Reſolution to fix himſelf, one time or other, in ſuch a State as is ſuitable to the End of his Being. You hear Men every Day in Converſation profeſs, that all the Honour, Power and Riches which they propoſe to themſelves, cannot give Satisfaction enough to reward them for half the Anxiety they undergo in the Purſuit, or Poſſeſſion of them. While Men are in this Temper, (which happens very frequently) how inconſiſtent are they with themſelves? They are wearied with the Toil they bear, but cannot find in their Hearts to relinquiſh it; Retirement is what they want, but they cannot betake themſelves to it: While they pant after Shade and Covert, they ſtill affect to appear in the moſt glittering Scenes of Life: But ſure this is but juſt as reaſonable as if a Man ſhould call for more Lights, when he has a mind to go to Sleep.

Since then it is certain that our own Hearts deceive us in the Love of the World, and that we cannot command our ſelves enough to reſign it, tho' we every Day wiſh our ſelves diſengaged from its Allurements; let us not ſtand upon a Formal taking of Leave, but wean our ſelves from them, while we are in the midſt of them.

It is certainly the general Intention of the greater Part of Mankind to accompliſh this Work, and live according to their own Approbation, as ſoon as they poſſibly can: But ſince the Duration of Life is ſo incertain, and that has been a common Topick of Diſcourſe ever ſince there was ſuch a thing as Life it ſelf, how is it poſſible that we ſhould defer a Moment the beginning to Live according to the Rules of Reaſon?

The Man of Buſineſs has ever ſome one Point to carry, and then he tells himſelf he'll bid adieu to all the Vanity of Ambition: The Man of Pleaſure reſolves to take his leave at leaſt, and part civilly with his Miſtreſs: But the Ambitious Man is entangled every Moment in a freſh Purſuit, and the Lover ſees new Charms in the Object he fancy'd he could abandon. It is therefore a fantaſtical way of thinking, when we promiſe our ſelves an Alteration in our Conduct from change of Place, and difference of Circumſtances; the ſame Paſſions will attend us where-ever we are, till they are Conquer'd, and we can never live to our Satisfaction in the deepeſt Retirement, unleſs we are capable of living ſo in ſome meaſure amidſt the Noiſe and Buſineſs of the World.

I have ever thought Men were better known, by what could be obſerved of them from a Peruſal of their private Letters, than any other way. My Friend, the Clergyman, the other Day, upon ſerious Diſcourſe with him concerning the Danger of Procraſtination, gave me the following Letters from Perſons with whom he lives in great Friendſhip and Intimacy, according to the good Breeding and good Senſe of his Character. The firſt is from a Man of Buſineſs, who is his Convert; The ſecond from one of whom he conceives good Hopes; The third from one who is in no State at all, but carryed one way and another by ſtarts.

SIR,

'I Know not with what Words to expreſs to 'you the Senſe I have of the high Obligation 'you have laid upon me, in the Penance you en'joined me of doing ſome Good or other, to a 'Perſon of Worth, every Day I live. The Stati'on I am in furniſhes me with daily Opportuni'ties of this kind; And the Noble Principle with

'which

'which you have inſpired me, of Benevolence to 'all I have to deal with, quickens my Application 'in every thing I undertake. When I relieve Me-'rit from Diſcountenance, when I aſſiſt a Friend-'leſs Perſon, when I produce conceal'd Worth, 'I am diſpleas'd with my ſelf, for having deſign'd 'to leave the World in order to be Virtuous. I 'am ſorry you decline the Occaſions which the 'Condition I am in might afford me of enlarging 'your Fortunes; but know I contribute more to 'your Satisfaction, when I acknowledge I am the 'better Man, from the Influence and Authority you 'have over,

SIR,

Your moſt Oblig'd, and

Moſt Humble Servant,

R. O.

SIR,

'I Am intirely convinced of the Truth of what 'you were pleas'd to ſay to me, when I was 'laſt with you alone. You told me then of the 'ſilly way I was in; but you told me ſo, as I ſaw 'you loved me, otherwiſe I could not obey your 'Commands in letting you know my Thoughts ſo 'ſincerely as I do at preſent. I know *the Crea-'ture for whom I reſign ſo much of my Character*, 'is all that you ſaid of her; but then the Trifler 'has ſomething in her ſo undeſigning and harmleſs, 'that her Guilt in one kind diſappears by the 'Compariſon of her Innocence in another. Will 'you, Virtuous Men, allow no alteration of Of-'fences? Muſt Dear be called by the hard 'Name you pious People give to common Wo-'men? I keep the ſolemn Promiſe I made you, in 'writing to you the State of my Mind, after your 'kind Admonition; and will endeavour to get the 'better of this Fondneſs, which makes me ſo much 'her humble Servant, that I am almoſt aſham'd to 'Subſcribe my ſelf Yours,

T. D.

SIR,

'THere is no State of Life ſo Anxious as that 'of a Man who does not live according to 'the Dictates of his own Reaſon. It will ſeem 'odd to you, when I aſſure you that my Love of 'Retirement firſt of all brought me to Court; but 'this will be no Riddle, when I acquaint you that 'I placed my ſelf here with a Deſign of getting ſo 'much Mony as might enable me to Purchaſe a 'handſome Retreat in the Country. At preſent my 'Circumſtances enable me, and my Duty prompts 'me, to paſs away the remaining Part of my Life 'in ſuch a Retirement as I at firſt propoſed to my 'ſelf; but to my great Misfortune I have intirely 'loſt the Reliſh of it, and ſhou'd now return to 'the Country with greater Reluctance than I at firſt 'came to Court. I am ſo unhappy, as to know 'that what I am fond of are Trifles, and that what 'I neglect is of the greateſt Importance: In ſhort, I 'find a Conteſt in my own Mind between Reaſon 'and Faſhion. I remember you once told me, that 'I might live in the World, and out of it, at the 'ſame time. Let me beg of you to explain this 'Paradox more at large to me, that I may conform 'my Life, if poſſible, both to my Duty and my 'Inclination.

I am

Your moſt Humble Servant,

R. B.

Letters are Directed

For The Spectator,

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in

Little-Britain.

Poſt paid.

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